

WHAT IS THE VET LOOKING FOR WHEN EXAMINING YOUR PET'S MOUTH?

- ✚ Bad breath/odor
- ✚ Yellow, brown, or discolored teeth
- ✚ Loose teeth
- ✚ Red, inflamed gums
- ✚ Swollen mouth, jaws, or gums
- ✚ Fractures or other visible enamel defects compromising tooth integrity
- ✚ Oral masses

Questions to think about:

- ✚ Does your pet still play with chew toys as much as he always has?
- ✚ Is your pet showing any signs that eating is uncomfortable?
(eating slowly or cautiously, chewing on one side of the mouth)
- ✚ When your pet yawns or pants, does the air turn foul and green?
- ✚ Does your pet do a lot of lip smacking? Do the teeth chatter?



Miniature and Toy Poodles, and other small breeds (Yorkies, Chihuahuas, Pomeranians), are more predisposed to periodontal disease. These dogs tend to develop severe forms of the illness because their tiny jaws do not accommodate their teeth well. They are also far less apt to be avid chewers like many other larger dogs are.

Poor nutrition can contribute to oral disease as well. Dogs that chew on toys, are given hard dog biscuits and/or eat primarily high-quality dry kibble seem to be less prone to developing periodontal disease. Veterinary dentists do not recommend giving dogs anything to chew on that cannot be indented with your own fingernail. Bones may be effective at removing calculus and preventing tartar buildup, however they carry the potential of causing mini-fractures or slab fractures. There are many chew toys, and longer lasting edible chews that can do a wonderful job of cleaning your dog's teeth, without risking broken teeth.

The prognosis for dogs with periodontal disease is highly variable, depending upon the stage of the disease, and the dog's immune status and general health. The prognosis is good to excellent if the owner is conscientious about regular dental care at home, preceded by a dental cleaning performed under general anesthesia. This is when full mouth radiographs are taken to determine if any extractions might be necessary. If periodontal disease is not properly diagnosed and effectively treated, the bacteria that proliferate in dental plaque and gum pockets can enter the bloodstream and migrate to distant organs. This can lead to bacteremia and septicemia, conditions which can lead to major illnesses. Not to mention the pain Fluffy might be experiencing from diseased and sensitive teeth.

Grade 1



Mild gingivitis and plaque are present. This is often reversible with brushing and appropriate chewing.

Grade 2



Mild to moderate tartar (mineralized plaque and bacteria) and gingivitis are present on multiple teeth. Gingivitis is usually reversible after professional scaling and polishing.

Grade 3



Heavy tartar and periodontal disease with bone loss are present. With grade 3 patients, oral pain is likely. Tooth lesions and fractures may be present under tartar. This is why we always recommend dental X-rays to fully evaluate bone loss and tooth health.



Grade 4



Severe tartar, periodontal disease, and oral pain are present. With grade 4 patients, tooth loss is imminent. The Veterinary Dental Association recommends dental X-rays to fully evaluate bone loss and tooth health.

